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TESTIMONY OF TIMOTHY PRATT

**In Strong Opposition to Raised H. B. No. 5619, AN ACT CONVEYING CERTAIN
PARCELS OF STATE LAND AND REQUIRING A STUDY OF CERTAIN
STATE REAL PROPERTY (SECTION 8)**

*Before the Government Administration and Elections Committee
March 14, 2016*

Senator Cassano, Representative Jutila, and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in opposition to Raised H.B. No. 5619, *An Act Conveying Certain Parcels of State Land and Requiring a Study of Certain State Real Property (Section 8)*

I strongly oppose the provision in section 8 of H.B. 5619 that would transfer from the CT DEEP to the Town of Groton several parcels of land in Mystic, comprising approximately 63 acres, formerly part of the Mystic Oral School property.

The majority of this land is in a wooded unspoiled state, and situated adjacent to other preserved parcels near the upper Mystic River, one of the most scenic parts of the state, enjoyed by the public for its natural beauty and tranquil setting. In 2010, the DEP set aside several parcels of the Oral School property as open space recognizing its special value.

This land is near the historically important Peace Sanctuary managed by the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center, and other publically accessible land. A portion of the land in question is on the river side of River Road.

The transfer to the Town of the Oral School land will subject it to unforeseen uses, including "economic development," potentially jeopardizing the unique qualities of the area that currently attracts bikers, joggers, bird watchers, nature lovers and artists, as well as tourists from within our state and beyond.

I urge removal of Section 8 from H.B. 5619, before the bill is sent out for a vote. The former Oral School property is one the last intact wooded parcels in this scenic area, which, together with other open space near and along the Mystic River, comprise one of Connecticut's natural treasures. Its future should not be subject to the changing and unpredictable priorities of local governments, but should be remain under the protection of the DEEP, as a natural resource for public benefit.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.